

CHARLIE'S HUSTLE

Despite on-field heroics, Rose remains controversial figure

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and broke 12 Major League and seven National League records. He holds the major league record for most hits (4,256) and games played. He also won the 1973 MVP award as well as the Rookie-of-the-Year award in 1963.

A two-time gold glove winner and 17-time All-Star, Rose led the Big Red Machine in Cincinnati to back-to-back World Series titles in 1975-76 and then won a title with the Phillies in 1980.

There's no argument against his numbers. Along with his reputation, they make him a ball player deserving of Hall of Fame consideration on the first ballot.

However, before a player can even be considered for the Hall, he must be eligible. Rose isn't and many people feel he shouldn't be inducted even if he gets reinstated by Major League baseball.

Michael Sokolove, a journalist who wrote "Hustle: The Truth, Life and Lies of Pete Rose" thinks Rose meets only one of the Hall of Fame criteria.

"Rose entered adulthood with one admirable value, his estimable work ethic toward his job: baseball," Sokolove said. "He gave his employer and fans their money's worth. Other than that, Pete

Rose was utterly without values. He was not a loyal friend, a faithful husband, a loving father or a giving person."

Baseball historian and UNL professor Benjamin Rader also said he doesn't think Rose should be reinstated any time soon.

"They have to deal with 'Shoeless' Joe Jackson before Rose," said Rader, who wrote a book in 1991 entitled "Baseball - A History of America's Game."

"I don't think they should be in any hurry," Jackson was part of infamous 1919 Chicago Black Sox, members of which were paid off to lose the World Series that season. Jackson always maintained his innocence.

Current Baseball Commissioner Bud Selig doesn't see any point in bringing back Rose, either.

Selig, who is the former general manager of the Milwaukee Brewers, has repeatedly said he will not reinstate Rose as long as he is commissioner. But Rader doubts if Selig would have suspended him for life if he had to dish out the original punishment.

"(Bart) Giamatti took much more drastic

action than many other commissioners might have," said Rader of the former commissioner, who died in office and was replaced by Faye Vincent. "He was hard-nosed and old-fashioned in his beliefs."

While Rose has his fair share of detractors he also has many people going to bat for him.

At the Hall of Fame induction ceremony July 25, Selig was greeted with a chorus of boos and heard chants of "Where's Pete Rose?" and "How about Charlie Hustle?"

Several exhibits in the baseball museum at the Hall of Fame already include Rose, as he was part of teams that won world titles. But many people want Rose in the exclusive section with the other baseball greats.

Included is former Phillies teammate Mike Schmidt, who wore a No. 14 lapel to honor Rose at his Cooperstown induction July 30, 1995.

"Rose was my grandmother's favorite player," Schmidt said. "I join her and the millions of baseball fans in hoping someday soon, someday very soon, Pete Rose will be standing right here. And there is no one more deserving to have his plaque hanging in the Hall. I'll promote it. I'm a Pete Rose ambassador."

Another Rose supporter is Allen Lewis, a member of Baseball's Veteran Committee since 1979. After a player is no longer eligible for regular Hall-of-Fame voting, his name is turned over to the Veteran Committee, which can put the player in the Hall of Fame. It has been responsible for the induction of Nebraska native Richie Ashburn, and, most recently, Orlando Cepeda.

"Rose belongs in the Hall of Fame as much as anyone who has ever played the game," Lewis said. "Pete's made mistakes, but so have many guys who are in the Hall. Pete's been a great ambassador for the game. I think his time will come."

It's been 10 years, but Jeff "Whitey" Richardson still remembers Pete Rose's last days as a baseball manager before being banned from baseball for life.

Richardson, a Grand Island native, was a rookie for the Cincinnati Reds in 1989 when Rose was the manager. He said for several weeks prior to Rose's banishment Aug. 23, 1989, reporters swarmed Reds players, trying to get the inside scoop on Rose's situation.

Then one day it all ended. "We were on a road trip to Chicago and had a day off," said Richardson, who is now the Head Baseball Coach at Louisiana Tech, but lives in Grand Island during the off-season. "Rose didn't come back with the team. Two days later he wasn't there. We never saw him again."

"He didn't have a chance to say goodbye. Pete told

Tommy Helms (interim manager) to tell the team to continue to play hard and that he would be following us."

Rose had gone to New York to meet with Baseball Commissioner A. Bartlett Giamatti

and after the meeting, Rose was banned from all major league baseball dugouts, stadiums and press boxes for life for gambling on a football game. One week later, Giamatti died of a heart attack.

At the time, Richardson said, he thought Rose would be out of baseball for a couple years and then be reinstated.

The 10-year anniversary is in 11 days.

The ironic thing about Rose being suspended from baseball is that he may have been the best representative of the how the game is supposed to be played on the field.

To players, Rose's work ethic was not only respected, but inspiring.

The respect and admiration didn't vanish when he changed titles from player to manager, Richardson said, even with the veteran players such as Ken Griffey Sr., Davey Collins and Ron Oyster.

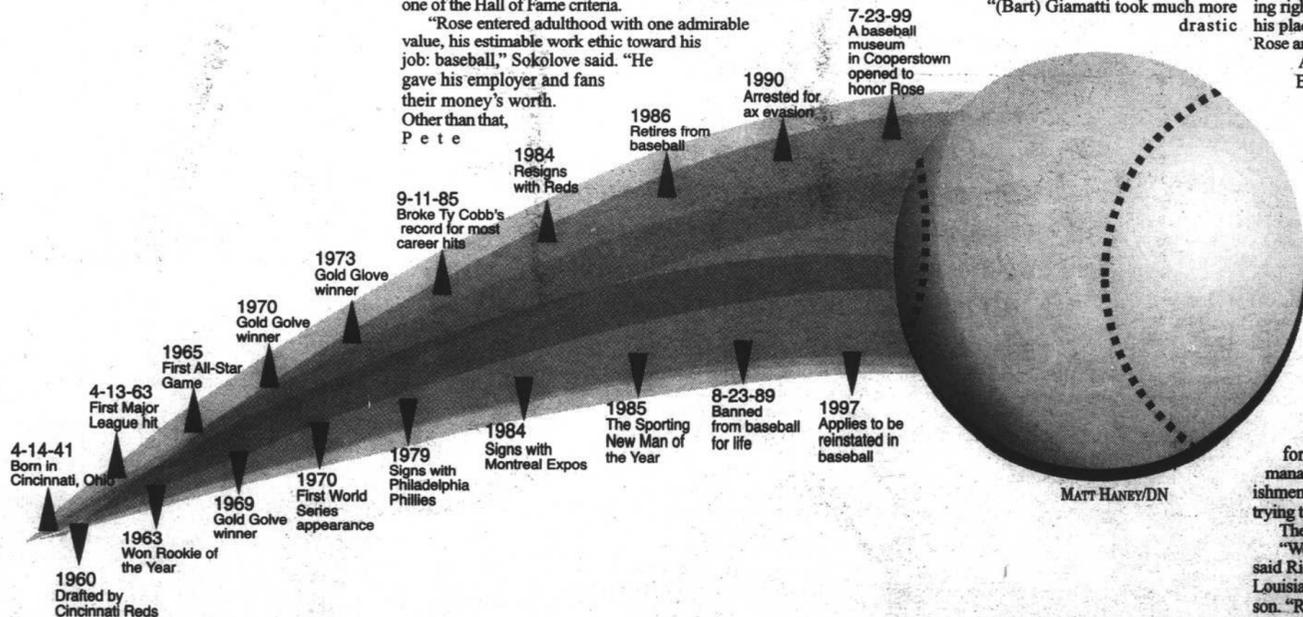
"When Rose would walk into the club house, it always got quiet," Richardson said. "I played with a lot of great players, and he was the only player who drew that kind of respect. It was like, 'wow.'"

Richardson had a special relationship with Rose. Being the only rookie position player, Richardson said Rose took him under his wing and helped Richardson adjust to big league pitchers. He would talk to Richardson

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